

Playstage

Junior

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## ANANSI AND THE BOX OF STORIES



A short play adapted from an African/West Indian story



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## ANANSI AND THE BOX OF STORIES

Slaves took these stories with them from Africa to the Caribbean.

This script is for primary schools to adapt to suit their needs.

This version differs from the source in that it has a Goddess rather than a God, and two spiders, Anansi and his brother, giving scope for more actors. Actors can improvise more speaking parts for children if they wish.

### CAST

ANANSI

STORYTELLER

PARENTS

GRANDPARENTS

CHILD 1

TREE

CHILDREN

BROTHER

GODDESS

TIGER

CHILD 2

BEE PUPPETEERS

*Running time approximately 15-20 minutes*

*12 speaking parts*

*Unlimited chorus/non-speaking animals, insects, trees, birds/puppeteers.*

## **MUSIC SUGGESTIONS**

### **For the Rainforest Scenes:**

Free African music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlOCFrcgf0o>

Bianca Ban – Spirit of Africa

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEYoAPVLaWs>

Cool African Music – African Safari

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxlpnNEk6eY>

Traditional African Music – Folk Music Instrumental

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7m61Em4A5k>

Anansi the Spider song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yp5VRM0-oRs>

### **For the escaping stories:**

Relaxing Fantasy Music Instrumental

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eud3WVx88ts>

Relaxing Celtic Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiqlZZddZEO>

## ANANSI AND THE BOX OF STORIES

### THE RAINFOREST

*African music/drums CD to introduce the play as actors take up their positions as TREES in the Rainforest. There should be a raised box, with steps up to it, on one side of the performing area. This is where THE GODDESS will sit. TREES are grouped in threes, so that ANIMALS, BIRDS and CHILDREN can move around and through them.*

*Fade music for STORYTELLER as he/she enters.*

### STORYTELLER

In the beginning of the World there was the Rainforest.

*(Some music while the TREES spread their branches and sway a little)*

There were animals, birds, and insects.

*(More music while the ANIMALS, BIRDS and INSECTS move in and out of the TREES.)*

Then there were people, adults and children.

*(More music whilst ADULTS mime working in the fields and CHILDREN play)*

The children played happily all day in the Rainforest. Then at night they went to their beds. All living things go to sleep at night too.

*(ANIMALS, BIRDS, INSECTS fall asleep under the trees. ADULTS move to side, and mime craft or cooking, CHILDREN go sleepily to bed. CHILD 1 & 2 sit up to speak, and the others sit up to listen. Others wriggle/roll.)*

CHILD 1

I'm tired, but I can't sleep.

CHILD 2

I'm exhausted, but I'm not sleepy.

CHILD 1

I want a bedtime story.

CHILD 2

What is a story?

CHILD 1

It's when people older than you tell you about something that happened long ago.

*(All the CHILDREN run round to sit at PARENTS' feet).*

FATHER

What are you doing up at this time of night?

CHILDREN *(together)*

We can't sleep.

MOTHER

Why not?

CHILDREN *(together)*

We want a story.

FATHER

What is a story?

CHILD 1

It is a nice thing, full of imagination.

CHILD 2

It has a beginning, middle and end.

MOTHER

We never had anything like that when we were small. Go and ask your grandparents.

*(CHILDREN run around to sit at GRANDPARENTS' feet)*

GRANDMA

What are you doing out of your beds at this time of night?

CHILDREN

We can't sleep.

GRANDA

And why not?

CHILD 1

We want a story.

GRANDMA

And what is a story?

CHILD 2

It is interesting, and makes you think.

GRANDA

I've never heard of such a thing. Go and ask Anansi the Spider.

He's clever and has lots of ideas.

*(Music as children look high and low all round the Rainforest responding  
To the music with some dance steps in their search. They call out for  
ANANSI. Music fades. One actor puts a chair center stage for BROTHER  
to hide behind and ANANSI to perch on when he wishes. At end of song  
ANANSI enters dancing proudly.)*

ANANSI SONG.

Anansi he is a spider

Anansi is a man.

Anansi, he is a lazy one.

Do as little as he can.

Anansi he is a spider  
Anansi is a man.  
Anansi, he is a lazy one.  
He always has a plan.

CHILD 1&2

He's there, look!

CHILDREN (*gathering round excitedly*)

Anansi! Anansi!

ANANSI

What are you doing up so late, children? You should be in your beds by now.

CHILDREN

We can't sleep. We want a story.

ANANSI

Do your parents know you are here?

CHILD 1

Granny & Grandad told us to ask you.

CHILD 2

They don't have any stories.

ANANSI

Children, stories have not come to Earth yet. They are kept in the skies, in a big box, by selfish Goddess. She doesn't want to share them with anyone.

CHILD 1

Anansi, you could spin a magic thread and climb to the sky.

CHILD 2

You could bring us all the stories of the World.

ANANSI

Do I have to?

CHILDREN

Please, Anansi.

ANANSI

I am not in the mood.

BROTHER (*jumping out of hiding, surprising the children*)

You lazy spider!

CHILD 1+2

Who is he?

ANANSI

My brother.

CHILD 1

We didn't know you had a brother.

ANANSI

I have a few...a few dozen. *He'll* go and get your box of stories.

CHILD 2

Will you, Brother?

BROTHER

What's in it for me?

ANANSI

You get to meet the Goddess of the Skies.

BROTHER

I'll go!

STORYTELLER

So Anansi's brother wove a silken thread, and climbed to the skies, and bounced over the fluffy clouds till he reached the Goddess of the Skies.

*(JOURNEY UP MUSIC: He spins the thread and climbs, (SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.) CHILDREN wave looking upwards, then move to the sides of the stage. ANANSI relaxes on his chair. BROTHER bounces over the clouds and disappears offstage. THE GODDESS appears and sits*



*on a box on the side of the stage. She is holding a wooden or golden box.)*

**GODDESS**

Who are you and what are you doing here?

*End of sample/*